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Letter dated 23 July 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to the report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, established under the auspices of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), contained in document S/2004/551.

The Government of Uganda has noted the contents of the report and its recommendations and would like to make the following comments and observations, particularly in as far as the report makes reference to Uganda:

- Paragraph 21 of the report refers to the challenges to the sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo posed by alleged intervention and military support provided by Rwanda and Uganda to its allies or proxy forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Uganda wishes to reiterate that it fully supports the Government of national unity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and regards the political process under way in that country as a purely internal affair of the Congolese people. Uganda does not, therefore, intervene or provide support whatsoever to so-called "allies or proxy forces" in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the report does not contain any evidence to the contrary.

- Paragraph 21 further acknowledges the continued presence of Ugandan insurgents of the Allied Democratic Forces in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo but does not make any recommendations on how to deal with such groups, which continue to pose a security threat to Uganda.

- Paragraphs 25, 27 and 28 underline the problem of weak government infrastructures in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo which results in the near absence of border controls on the eastern border. This has resulted in the apparent porosity and permeability of the borders. Uganda believes that this problem can only be solved through the strengthening of the governmental structures of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in these areas. We welcome the recommendations of the Group of Experts contained in paragraphs 110 and 111.

- Paragraphs 31, 32, 33 and 34 contain allegations of connivance by Ugandan police and military in cross-border arms trafficking and violation of customs and immigration procedures. But the report seems to rely on hearsay evidence

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and does not attempt to provide any hard evidence. My Government strongly refutes these allegations. If there is any trafficking it must be perpetrated illicitly by criminal elements on both sides of the border and not with any official sanction. Uganda is tired of reports based on speculation. If there is any Ugandan soldier on the soil of the Democratic Republic of the Congo he should be arrested by MONUC forces.

With regard to paragraph 35, my Government acknowledges the inadequacy of marine patrols on Lake Albert. This, however, is a result of lack or insufficiency of financial resources to adequately equip the marine surveillance services, rather than a deliberate government policy.

My Government vehemently denies any official collaboration with "Chief Kahwa" or "Chief Kisembo" as alleged in paragraph 36 (box) of the report. The conclusion by the Group of Experts of Ugandan complicity in the activities of these people with regard to violation of the arms embargo is totally unsupported by evidence.

Similarly, my Government denies any official collaboration with a "Commander Jerome" as alleged in paragraph 38. It is not true that this person receives any help whatsoever from Ugandan troops as alleged. Ugandan troops in this area are strictly confined to the Ugandan side of the border and have no presence in Aru as alleged. It must be pointed out that cross-border trade between Arua in Uganda and Aru in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been going on for ages and this fact alone is no evidence of any official Ugandan sanctioning or support of illegal activities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

With regard to paragraph 42, my Government regrets that the Group of Experts causally refers to "credible reports of flights ... originating from Uganda to Mongbwalu subsequent to the embargo ..." which the Group says it did not sufficiently investigate. Such casual references in several parts of the report cast unnecessary and unsupported aspersions on the Ugandan Government. The same also applies to paragraphs 62 and 63.

With regard to the statement contained in paragraph 77 about protection provided to relatives of leaders of dissident groups, my Government considers that the crimes of individuals should not be visited upon relatives. Any assistance that may be provided by my Government to such persons is done purely on humanitarian considerations and it is provided in a non-discriminatory manner.

Uganda denies the alleged or any collaboration of "Ugandan officials" with the FDLR group as contained in paragraph 86. The report contains no shred of evidence to support the allegation.

My Government takes due note of the Group's recommendations contained in paragraphs 112, 114 and 115 of the report and undertakes to act on them, within its financial capacity.

My Government also welcomes the recommendations in paragraphs 128, 129 and 130 with regard to the enhancement of the capacity of MONUC. We believe that the robust presence of MONUC, particularly in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, is a necessary prerequisite for the re-establishment of effective authority over the region by the Kinshasa Government.

We believe that solutions to the Congo problems lie not in inquiries by expert groups but rather in strengthening regional cooperation and putting in place effective structures of government. Finger pointing will not help. This is why Uganda has actively taken part in all regional peace processes. We believe also in self-policing and self-monitoring by countries concerned through enhancing their capacities rather than external factors. We also believe that an all-inclusive Government in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will go a long way towards stabilizing the country and the region.

I should be grateful if you would distribute this letter as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Francis K. **Butagira**
Ambassador, Permanent Representative